A NEW RECORD OF *DIDOGOBIUS SPLECHTNAI* AHNELT & PATZNER, 1995 (GOBIIDAE) FROM THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN SEA. **Sergio STEFANNI**, School of Biological Sciences, University of Bristol, Woodland Rd., BS8 1UG, UK.
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Although the fishes of the Mediterranean Sea and adjacent waters have been extensively studied, much remains unknown about certain groups, particularly those represented mainly by small species with little or no economic importance. The infrequent capture of small gobies is often related to the cryptobenthic nature of their habitat which is not easily accessible by traditional fishing methods. Use of less conventional collecting methods, especially SCUBA techniques, has enlarged our knowledge of the abundance, geographical range and diversity of small gobies (Miller, 1963, 1977, 1986; Miller and Tortonese, 1968; Bouchereau and Tomasini, 1989; Ahnelt, 1990; Ahnelt *et al.*, 1994). New genera and species of marine gobies have been described (Miller, 1969; Ahnelt and Patzner, 1995), although some of them remain known to science only from a holotype (Miller, 1966, 1992). The majority of records in recent years are from localities where SCUBA diving is more commonly practiced such as the coast of the north-western Mediterranean, the Balearic Islands, northern Adriatic, and Israel. *Didogobius splechtnai* has been reported previously only from the holotype and paratypes from the Balearic island of Ibiza, in the western Mediterranean (Ahnelt and Patzner, 1995). The new record of this species is from Cala Calandra, on the island of Lampedusa, Italy (Fig. 1), situated 1200 km from the type locality. Only one specimen has been collected, a female of 22 mm standard length. Its meristic characters and head lateral-line sensory papillae patterns resemble the feature described for the holotype and paratypes by Ahnelt and Patzner (1995): D1 VI, D2 I/10, A I/9, P 16. Scales in lateral series 32. Coloration in life presents the typical four dark brown transverse bands and three pale transparent interspaces. However the new specimen differs from the previous material by the possession of an intense dark brown to black spot at the origin of the pectoral fins and a yellowish caudal fin (Fig. 2).

The specimen of *D. splechtnai* from Lampedusa was collected in July 1996 after spreading quinaldine solution (diluted 1:10 with ethyl alcohol) inside crevices, caves, pits and under stones, on the eastern coast of the island. The specimen collected was found in a small pit covered by stones where the water depth was 4.5 m. It was associated with other gobies *Gobius paganellus*, *G. cobitis* and *G. bucchichi*. Specimens of *Stenopus spinosus*, a small cave-dwelling crustacean, were also found. The area where this tiny goby was found has a rocky bottom with many pits, caves, cracks and clefts. The substrate is on a gradual incline from 2 to 7 m in depth. On the bottom of these pits there are stones which increase the number of potential hiding places. Just farther offshore a sandy bottom with a patchy distribution of *Posidonia oceanica* extends from 10 m depth to deeper water on a gentle slope. Water temperature ranges from 20 to 25°C in summer and for most of the time the visibility is about 25-30 m.

Lampedusa is the most southerly Italian island and its structure is calcareous rather than volcanic unlike the neighbouring island of Linosa. These islands are closer to Tunisia than to Sicily and are connected to the African continental shelf. *Didogobius splechtnai* could have reached Lampedusa as a postlarval stage transported by currents across the Sicilian Channel or by the adult stage spreading along North African coasts. Only further investigations will provide essential data to improve the knowledge of its zoogeography.

The specimen is retained in the collection of the Natural History Museum in London (BMNH 1999.3.29.1).

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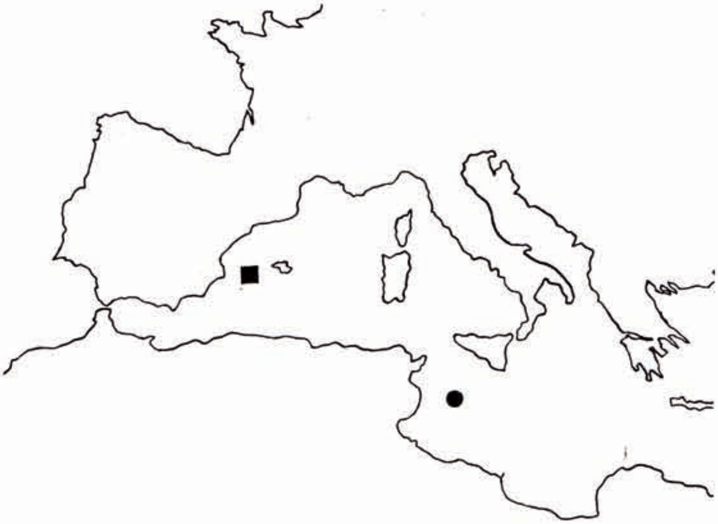

Fig. 1. - Locality of sample of the new record of *D. splechtnai*: island of Lampedusa (●), Italy, and first record: island of Ibiza (■), Spain (Ahnelt and Patzner, 1995).

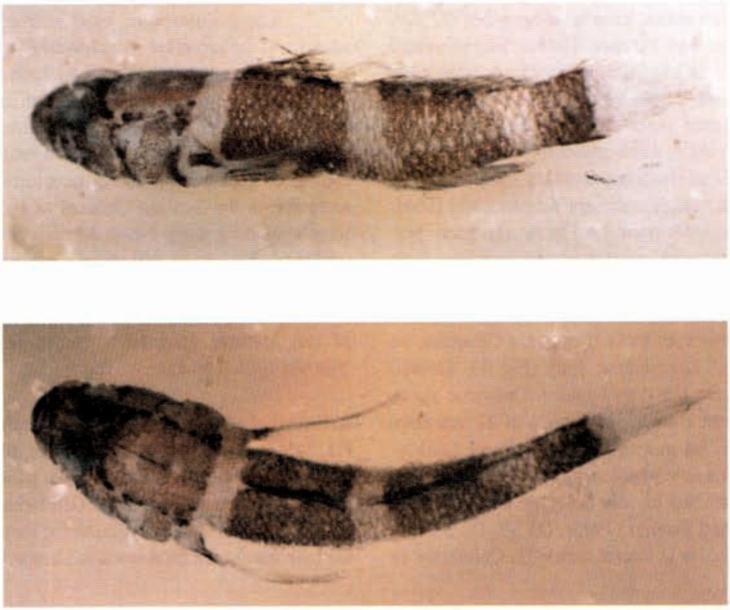

Fig. 2. - *Didogobius splechtnai*, female, SL = 22 mm, Lampedusa (Italy). **a**: Lateral view; **b**: Dorsal view.

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